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ABSTRACT

A study was done to examine the expectations and aspirations of teachers participating in a school-university collaborative effort, called a Professional Development School (PDS). A PDS is a working relationship between school and university personnel to merge the worlds of theory and practice in which both parties achieve parity in governance and resource allocation, use negotiation as the chief problem-solving process, and promote communication between and among all levels of the partnership. The study sought teachers' perceptions of the collaborative process. Twelve faculty members of an elementary school, in its first operational year as a PDS, participated in interviews and classroom observations. Results revealed that: (1) an event beyond the teachers' control was usually responsible for their initial exploration of PDS; (2) the information that teachers remembered receiving about their role within a PDS was limited and had little effect on their decision to join; (3) teachers made their decision to become a part of the PDS based on their expectation of greater control over their environment; (4) teachers hoped the formation of the PDS would provide opportunities for them to assert greater control over their personal and professional growth; (5) the teachers' desire for control over their environment increased through their participation in PDS. Contains 14 references. (JB)

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In Search of Autonomy: Teachers' Aspirations and Expectations from a School-University Collaborative

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Abstract

The expectations of teacher participants appear to receive little, if any, attention in conceptualizing and actualizing a school/university collaborative such as a Professional Development School (PDS). While key PDS participants, teachers rarely hold shared interest in the collaborative process. This study attempted to provide a forum in which PDS classroom teachers could voice perceptions of the collaborative process so that an image of their viewpoint could begin to emerge. Twelve faculty members of an elementary school, in its first operational year as a PDS, agreed to participate in the interviews and classroom observations that framed the study. In analyzing the data five assertions were developed:

1. An event beyond the teachers' control was responsible for their initial exploration of teaching in the PDS.

2. The information that teachers remembered receiving about their role within a PDS was limited and had very little effect on their decision to join.

3. Teachers made their decision to become a part of the PDS collaborative based on their expectation of greater control over their environment.

4. Teachers hoped the formation of the PDS would provide opportunities for them to assert greater control over their personal and professional growth.

5. The teachers' desire for control over their environment increased through their participation in the PDS.

In Search of Autonomy: Teachers' Aspirations and Expectations from a School-University Collaborative

In 1986, the Holmes Group recommended a number of changes to the traditional programs being run by most colleges and schools of education. One of the recommendations was the creation of the Professional Development School (PDS). The Holmes Group envisioned the PDS as an arena in which university professors and K-12 faculties could meet and attempt to merge the worlds of theory and practice. The provision of such a site was seen as central to transforming classroom instruction and teacher education. The Holmes Group insisted that its reform effort:

> ...hinges on a complex set of reforms happening all together: liberal education--that is, deep understanding of the disciplines by teachers and their students; reconstituted, coherent education studies; and clinical studies expertly supervised in authentic, exemplary settings. Where they all come together is in the Professional Development School--in essence, a new institution. (Holmes Group, 1990, p. 1)

Most PDS advocates agreed that this new institution should provide an authentic site in which to train future teachers. However, different views emerged regarding the optimum ways to meet this goal. Goodlad (1993) reports that "within a very short span of years, the words 'professional development school' (PDS) have been attached to a wide range of concepts and practices" (p. 25). He then describes the three most common PDS attributes: (a) schools that actively participate in the preparation of pre-service teachers, (b) schools that serve as professional development centers with the focus on in-service teacher education, and (c) schools that serve as laboratories for the designing of exemplary educational

practice. These attributes mirror the Holmes Group's (1990) stated goals for the PDS:

> By 'Professional Development School' we do not mean just a laboratory school for university research, nor a demonstration school. Nor do we mean just a clinical setting for preparing student and intern teachers. Rather we mean all of these together: a school for the development of novice professionals, for continuing development of experienced professionals, and *for the research and development of the teaching profession.* (p. 1)

In order to meet these goals, most proponents of any school-university collaborative, including the PDS, would argue that a collaboration should: (a) enable the cooperating parties to achieve parity in governance and resource allocation, (b) use negotiation as the chief problem-solving process in the program, and (c) promote communication between and among all levels of the partnership. A school-university collaboration, therefore, should include common agendas, shared status and power, and consensus building. It has to involve more give than take and requires a great deal of commitment from all parties (Schwartz, 1990). Goodlad (1988), would add two additional concerns. A collaboration must be a planned effort; while it must be given room to evolve, a collaboration must have some format and guide for implementation. Additionally, a school-university partnership is a collection of parties, each with a specific self-interest (Goodlad, 1988).

Before proceeding further, a pause is needed to clarify definitions and terminology -- a necessary requirement since, as Watson and Fullan (1991) cautioned, terminology is crucial in the reporting of any study about Professional Development Schools. Already in this paper's opening

paragraphs, we have referenced collaboration, partnership, and Professional Development School in discussing collaborative school improvement projects between teachers and university personnel. This creates the type of problems Clark (1988) addressed in his statement:

> One of the complications of investigating this subject [collaboration] is that different terms are used to describe similar activities, and on the other hand, different meanings are attached to the same term. Authors speak of partnerships, collaborations, consortiums, networks, clusters, inter-organizational agreements, collectives, and cooperatives, frequently without definition and often without distinguishing their chosen descriptor from other possible terms. (p. 33).

To reduce this potential for confusion, we will use the terms Professional Development School, collaboration, or partnership interchangeably and define them straightforwardly. All three are meant to refer to working relationships between school and university personnel in which both parties achieve parity in governance and resource allocation, use negotiation as the chief problem-solving process in the program, and promote communication between and among all levels of the partnership. This very basic definition serves the purpose of this study very well, and should help clarify our use of these terms for the reader.

In school-university collaboratives, such as the PDS, the recognized parties are the administrators and faculties of the university and school. It is important, in respect to the issue of self-interest, to remember that any collaboration, even the PDS, is political in nature. As Schattschneider (1975) indicated no political entity can exist unless there is some community of shared interest to balance against the self-interest of the

participants. Schattschneider also cautioned that in order to determine what the shared interest might be, one must first identify which parties are included and excluded from discussions about an issue. He argued that communities with shared interest are comprised of parties that have been given a chance to participate. While everyone might recognize a marginalized group as a part of the community, unless they are given a chance to work out their problems in the open with other interested parties, they will not have a shared interest in the process. Thus, Schattschneider (1975) contended that partnerships are made stronger by reducing the number of excluded groups.

As one re-examines the current PDS literature it becomes apparent that school teachers are, at best, silent participants in the collaborative process. Goodlad (1993) insists that school/university relationships have been characterized by the subordination of the school teacher:

> Up to now, in relations involving school and university personnel, the former have been virtually subservient. At best, when universities have occasionally sought to work with schools, their stance commonly has been one of noblesse oblige. (p. 30)

Teacher discussion of the three PDS missions (as elaborated by Goodlad and the Holmes Group) is non-existent or severely muted. Better teacher preparation, staff development, and collection/dissemination of applicable, timely research are presented to teachers as predetermined goals. Despite the fact that teachers typically comprise the largest block of participants in a PDS, they have typically been excluded from the goal-setting process. The dominance of university professor and school district administrator perspectives limits the extent to which specific teacher self-interests are addressed. The desires or expectations of teacher participants in a PDS

collaborative appear to receive little, if any, attention. Consequently, teachers, while key participants in a PDS, rarely hold shared interest in the collaborative process.

This study was an attempt to provide a forum in which PDS teachers could voice their perceptions of the collaborative process so that an image of classroom teacher viewpoint could begin to emerge. By giving teachers a voice in describing their motivation to participate in a particular PDS project and in explicating their expectations as the project began, it was hoped that the teachers' perceived self-interest could be better understood by all PDS participants. Teacher self-interest, once better understood, might inform the negotiations that must take place to produce a strong PDS and strengthen an existing PDS (or any other form of school/university collaborative, for that matter).

To frame this qualitative inquiry, a series of questions were developed: Why would a teacher choose to become a PDS faculty member? What information does a teacher receive about his or her function as a PDS faculty member? What do teachers hope to gain from the collaborative experience?

Methodology

This study of teachers' expectations and aspirations uses Stryker's (1980) theory of symbolic interactionism as its framework for analysis. Within this framework it is assumed that participants in any project or process are in the process of role-taking and socialization. Stryker (1980) defines these terms as follows:

> Role-taking is one way persons learn how others locate them and of others' expectations for their behavior. But there is a larger process through which this and related learning takes place: socialization.

> Socialization is the generic term used to refer to the processes by which the newcomer--the infant, the rookie, the trainee, the freshman--becomes incorporated into organized patterns of interaction. (p. 63)

Participants in this study were newcomers to the collaborative process and, therefore, were being socialized into new roles. In this research, we recognized that study participants constructed their perceptions of the collaborative process from both the information presented to them and their past knowledge and life experiences. Clearly, this process was not static, but a continuous interacting of the participants' conceptions of the situation and the contextual aspects of the situation. In view of these circumstances, symbolic interactionism seemed the most appropriate tool for data gathering and analysis.

Twelve classroom teachers involved in the partnership (approximately half the instructional staff) were selected and interviewed during the spring of the collaboration's first operational year. Paralleling the interview process, participant observations were conducted for the majority of meetings held between school and university participants over a six month period. At the time of the interviews, Tom McGowan had been actively involved with PDS planning, organization, and operation for over eighteen months. Jim Powell had been on site for over six months. Both spent at least five hours per week in various PDS meetings, visited classrooms regularly, and were well known by the school's faculty.

Participant selection was based on the individual teacher's degree of acceptance of the collaborative efforts, as judged by their fellow teachers, administrators, and us. The participants were classified as being (a) <u>active and interested</u>, (b) <u>inactive but interested</u>, or (c) <u>inactive and not interested</u>

in the collaborative process. Four study participants from each category were chosen (12 total). The participants were also evenly divided among the primary and intermediate grade levels. Only one teacher originally targeted for interviewing declined to participate further in the study. Another teacher representing the appropriate category was then selected and agreed to be interviewed.

While interviews were open-ended, and somewhat free-wheeling, the following questions provided focus as interviews proceeded:
How had the teachers first heard about the collaborative project? What had they been told about the project? What influenced their decision to participate? What had they hoped to accomplish during this year? What were their plans for the coming year?

Triangulation (Miles & Huberman, 1984) was accomplished through the collection and review of relevant documents, observational data, and interviews. To gather shared or group information, other PDS teachers were also interviewed regarding their recollection and interpretation of events at the school. During data analysis the participants were presented with our preliminary conclusions and given the opportunity to comment or elaborate on them. As data categories and assertions were created, the data were constantly reexamined for disconfirming evidence (Erickson, 1986). When located, alternative explanations were identified and categories discarded or redefined as necessary.

Background of the Study

An elementary school serving an urban area in the Southwest provided the study site. The school was in the first operational year as a PDS. For purposes of this study the site is referenced as Saguaro Elementary School. The K-5 school serves approximately 435 students and

is staffed by 34 certified personnel, seventeen regular classroom teachers and nine special area teachers (Brimhall, 1992). The teaching areas are grouped in three pods feeding off a central library. Almost all the study participants worked in self-contained classroom areas which opened directly into the center of each pod. The student body was characterized by high mobility (the student turnover rate exceeded 80%); linguistic diversity (over twenty languages were spoken in the building); and racial/ethnic variety (over 60% of the school's population being composed of Black, Hispanic, Native American, or Asian students). Approximately 80% of the students received free or reduced lunch.

In the spring of the 1989-90 school year, the superintendent announced that Saguaro Elementary School would become the district's Professional Development School. A new principal was selected to administer the PDS. Throughout the spring and summer of 1990 the principal, superintendent, two professors from the local university, and three university administrators met to conceptualize the project.

During the 1990-91 school year, beginning in August and continuing through March, the principal, several university representatives, a representative of the teachers' professional association, and Saguaro teachers and staff outlined the implementation process and developed the procedures which would guide the creation of the PDS. While the entire Saguaro staff participated, different levels of commitment were demonstrated in establishing basic guidelines and writing a mission statement to formalize the PDS's operational philosophy.

In early spring, 1991, a flier was mailed to the other twenty-two schools in the district inviting teachers to an informational meeting about the PDS, held on April 1st in the Saguaro cafeteria. Participants at this

orientation meeting received a copy of the newly drafted mission statement and information about the nature and purpose for a PDS. Saguaro teachers spoke at length regarding their classroom experiences that year. University representatives sketched Saguaro's possible roles in the teacher education program.

By March 1991, the existing Saguaro faculty had to decide whether they would remain at the PDS or transfer to another building within the district. These teachers understood that, if they chose to leave Saguaro, they would be placed in another classroom somewhere within the district, although requests for a specific grade level or school could not be guaranteed. Fourteen teachers left at that time (Brimhall, 1992). Those district faculty indicating an interest in the PDS project were contacted and invited to apply for a teaching position. Applicants were interviewed by a committee comprised of Saguaro teachers and the school principal. Available positions were filled by the end of April. In early May a half-day "get-acquainted" meeting was held at the University to introduce the newly selected teaching staff and university participants and to open dialogue about PDS operating procedures.

Results of the Study

This study focused on the factors that teachers described as being important in their decision to join the Saguaro PDS. The questions framing the study were: Why would a teacher choose to become a PDS faculty member? What information does a teacher receive about his or her function as a PDS faculty member? What do teachers hope to gain from the collaborative experience? Throughout the unstructured interviews the expectations and aspirations of the teachers emerged as they described what

they knew about school/university collaboration and how, when, and where that knowledge was obtained.

In analyzing the data five assertions were developed:

1. An event beyond the teachers' control was responsible for their initial exploration of teaching in the PDS.

2. The information that teachers remembered receiving about their role within a PDS was limited and had very little effect on their decision to join.

3. Teachers made their decision to become a part of the PDS collaborative based on their expectation of greater control over their environment.

4. Teachers hoped the formation of the PDS would provide opportunities for them to assert greater control over their personal and professional growth.

5. The teachers' desire for control over their environment increased through their participation in the PDS.

To examine these assertions, we searched for a format that would best allow the teachers' voices to emerge from the study. Strauss (1987) indicated that qualitative researchers have the choice to "...keep the presentation very abstract; or they can give very little theoretical commentary, but give a great deal of data, allowing it to speak for itself" (p. 215-216). Since this study attempted to illuminate the teachers' perspective on the collaborative process, it was felt that their speech should dominate. The best way to allow teachers' voices to be heard was featuring their quotations rather than paraphrasing or summarizing their comments.

An event beyond the teachers' control was responsible for their initial exploration of teaching in the PDS.

While some aspects of any school/university collaborative tend to be almost universal in nature, many more elements seem particular to each individual PDS. This is to be expected, since so many different parties are involved in setting a collaboration, and so many variables are encountered by these participants. For example, colleges of education are involved in the establishment of Professional Development Schools, but no two colleges of education are similar in every respect, or even in many respects. Thus, the politics and interactions inherent in each situation tend to force a collaborative effort to take its own unique shape.

In this instance, the decision to teach at Saguaro was left to the teachers. The legal arrangement between the district and the teachers' association allowed teachers to transfer out of and into the PDS without penalty and without hindrance. Despite this freedom of choice, it became clear that most participants decided to examine the possibility of teaching in the PDS as a reaction to factors outside of the individual's control.

For the five study participants who were already teaching at Saguaro in the spring, 1990, the conversion of the school into a PDS forced a decision upon them. They knew that they had less than one school year in which to decide if they wanted to stay and become a part of the PDS or transfer out. While the reasons for deciding to stay varied, they were all faced with a decision that had to be made, yet was not of their making. One of these study participants explained the mechanics and implications of this forced-choice quite clearly:

> Well, you know, definitely for sure you had to commit yourself in March. And I was always sort of leaning towards it all year long. I mean I really thought it sounded like a neat idea and I enjoy working with P [the principal] a lot. And I feel real comfortable working with her. I feel she gives me a lot of leeway to try things. So, I was leaning towards it, but I guess I definitely made my decision in March.

Among the seven study participants who joined the faculty of the PDS in late spring, 1991, three were forced to look for new positions when previous jobs were discontinued. As one of the job-seekers stated:

> And in, at the end of March, I found out that the position I had at the other school was. I was being RIFed. There were four first grades and they would only need three the next year. I was the last one in, so I figured I should be the first one out. That was my own personal thing.

For two others the factors forcing change were not so obvious as a discontinued position. While these teachers were not left with an either/or decision, changes in working conditions were strong enough to prompt an examination of other teaching positions that might stimulate their interest. These study participants characterized their decision to join the Saguaro faculty as follows:

> Two years before that, my first two years of teaching I had two great people. [sharing a fourth grade team] We just meshed. We had the same philosophy. We worked really well together, and it was exciting. One of them stopped teaching to have a baby, and the other one moved away. So then they brought in two new ones that didn't have any time, so suddenly for the first time I was by myself. And I did all my own planning, which was fine, but I was really missing having strong teammates.

> I guess around last of March or first of April my administrator, who had been my administrator for ten years, announced she was leaving. She was going to another assignment. The notice came out that they were doing interviews

> for positions here at Saguaro. And since I was curious about it the year before that, and since my life was going to get changed anyway, I thought well maybe this was the time for me to make a move.

Two other study participants shared experiences that seemed to disconfirm this assertion. Apparently, they were not presented with either/or situations, or external organizational shifts. The forces they reacted to seemed more internal:

> But my desire to leave my current situation was so strong, that I had to make a change.

> I'd been at my previous school for I believe since 1981 or 82. That's the longest I've ever been at any one school. So I, I was ready for a personal move. I needed a new environment. I needed to move to a different level. My personal growth as an educator almost demanded that I seek new stimulus.

When these two participants were presented with this assertion (that events beyond the teachers' control prompted the move to Saguaro), they readily acknowledged that it accurately described their situations. For them, the outside forces were classrooms which had become too confining and relationships that had become strained by teaching philosophies that departed from their norm. They were fleeing professional lives that had grown too constricted from teaching too long in the same building with the same faculty.

<u>The information that teachers remembered receiving about their role within a PDS was limited and had very little effect on their decision to join.</u>

While the participants initiated their examination of the PDS in response to external forces, that was only the first step in the longer process of deciding whether or not to become a member of the collaborative. The

response triggered the decision to participate, but did not finalize it. A second step in the process was information gathering about the Professional Development School. During this phase the participants sought information which would not only help them confirm their desire and ability to participate in such a venture, but also help them define the extent of that participation. Throughout the interviews, it was clear that many of the participants received much of their information through rumor and second-hand reports. They relied on casual conversation rather than formal investigation. As several study participants indicated:

> My first contact with it. I guess maybe rumor was my first contact with it. Something will be happening here, and I guess rumors like that were around all year long. But the first impression I was given was that this would be a lab school for teachers. A place to pull someone out of the circuit for help and rejuvenate them or repair them.

> When I first heard about it, it was in a faculty meeting two years ago. Our principal had brought it up [the announcement about the creation of a PDS] and just said, "This is going to be happening at Saguaro."

> Actually, a co-worker of mine that also teaches 4th grade, she had heard about it. She and her family have known P [the principal] for years and years. They go way back, they're family friends. She had heard about it, and she went to it [the April introductory meeting], I didn't. I don't know that I even knew about it at that time, or maybe I knew about it but I was busy and didn't come. But she went to it. She was real excited about it. Said that it sounded great. She told me everything that she had heard.

Even the official announcements (e.g., the flier which briefly described the Professional Development School and invited interested teachers in the district to attend the informational meeting) did not provide clear guidelines

for what the teachers might anticipate at a PDS. One study participant offered the following assessment of the flier's informational value:

> It, the flier, you know promoted the things you have at a professional development school, of course, no one knew what that meant.

Better teacher preparation, staff development, and research have been identified as the primary goals for Professional Development Schools (Goodlad, 1993). Yet, study participants did not offer these goals when asked what they had heard the focus of the school would be. Three study participants, for example, omitted these issues entirely:

> You know, it's like a lab school. It's like a demonstration site. I don't think there really is a definition for it.

> Well, the thing that I heard the most was being said over and over was, "We don't exactly know what it is. We don't know, and it's kind of like we're just going ahead, and we'll just see what happens."

> P [the principal] came to us and said, "We don't know what this is yet. You know that we're going to be a Professional Development School, but we're defining what that is in cooperation with ASU and the district." And so, I felt like my part would be to do a lot of listening to get other people's ideas, and then generate some of my own. We were going to come up with some kind of definition for what that meant to us.

While a lack of information might be seen as hindering a teacher's willingness to make a major professional judgement, most study participants suggested that the silence signalled an opportunity that sparked great interest and promised potential for growth. In other words, their vagueness regarding the specifics of PDS operations may have actually

increased their likelihood of participating. As one study participant insisted:

> And so, I really didn't know a lot about where they intended on going. But, I was interested because for me it was kind of like intellectual stimulation besides teaching. And I was looking for that.

While it was clear that all study participants did participate in information gathering activity, it was also clear that the search was not systematic or intensive, and, in some cases, perhaps selective in what they remembered hearing. We make this observation because participating university and school administrators reported that they regularly provided information on what the primary mission of the school might be. Yet, these statements were supported by only one study participant:

> Not specifically. No, I don't. [Remember the role of the teacher being explained] More they [university representatives] explained what their role would be. That they [university representatives] would be working closely. That there would be research going on at this school. That there would be a professor in residency. That it would become somewhat of a training school for teachers.

This response to a question about what the university's role in the PDS would be seems to indicate a clear understanding of the mission of the PDS, and, it might be assumed, of the teacher's role within the it. However, when asked about what information he had received about his particular role, the teacher could not recall getting any such information.

A possible explanation for these disconfirming data might be that the study participants saw their role and the role of the university participants as being separate. During these early stages the concept of equity had not begun to emerge, and it is possible that they saw their role as being quite

different from that of the district or university personnel. A second possible explanation is that their willingness to accept the vague, general information they remembered receiving was based on a desire to leave the situation as open as possible--a desire clearly stated by all the participants, in fact.

In either case it is clear that the teachers remembered receiving limited information about their role as teachers within the PDS. It is also clear that their decision to become a part of the PDS project was not based on information that they received from "official" sources.

Teachers made their decision to become a part of the PDS collaborative based on their expectation of greater control over their environment.

The emptiness and obscurity of the message regarding PDS operations encouraged study participants to construct their own understandings of what they would be able to do. Their expectations were nurtured by their reported lack of information concerning how they would collaboratively work with the university to redesign the pre-service teaching programs, conduct research, and improve staff development. Other members of the collaborative (e.g., the professors, district administrators) may have discussed, grasped, and perhaps accepted these goals. In the perceived absence of any clear directives, the teachers saw the PDS as a chance to create an environment in which they would be free to teach, in whatever manner they chose to define classroom activity. As Sills (1968) has indicated:

> In order effectively to perform, i.e., validate his occupancy of a social position, the actor must learn--either at first hand or vicariously--what performances are associated with what positions. In short, he must be acquainted with at least certain sectors of the social system;

> he must know what obligations, privileges, rights, and duties are the defining characteristics of each position he may be called on to occupy. (p. 547)

Without such information, the participants were able to write their own job descriptions based on their past experiences and expectations. They knew how they defined themselves as teachers and what great teaching was for them. The teachers saw the PDS as an opportunity to realize long-held visions of teaching. When asked what they thought their role would be when they were selected to work in the PDS, several study participants responded:

> And I sort of assumed that other things, I thought that new things would be tried. You know, new techniques. If somebody had an idea they wanted to do, we could try it.

> Well that was undefined. That's why I liked it. The role of the teacher here hadn't been defined. None of that had been set. And that's what I wanted. It was real kind of nebulous, because it was like we're going to just kind of evolve as we go along. The only parameters were that we have to meet state essential skills, but how we do that was going to be totally up to us. The word "teacher empowerment" was used over and over again.

> And the more questions I asked, the more I found out they really didn't know. They wanted to develop it. And that's what I thought was exciting! The fact that we didn't have an idea of a canned program already. That you were going to let the staff decide what the PDS would be. Empowerment is something I have always wanted and think is wonderful.

In this situation, the term teacher empowerment was understood by the participants to mean they would be given the opportunity to create and define their role within the PDS. Empowerment, no longer just a "hot"

educational catch-phrase, became a reality that drew them into participation in the PDS project.

Teachers hoped the formation of the PDS would provide opportunities for them to assert greater control over their personal and professional growth.

If the teachers' expectations were for a school in which they could define the role of teacher, what were their aspirations for life within such a setting? When asked about how the school would operate, it became clear that most study participants envisioned a process of learning and professional growth which would never have an end. They did not see the creation of the school as a product that could be managed, mastered, and then replicated elsewhere. Their language expressed hope for the time to create and the freedom to try new things. Two study participants desired a climate in which chances could be taken without fear of failure:

> It would just be kind of an experimental school where you could try all kinds of different things and if you didn't want to use the textbooks, you don't have to. They said that they were going to give teachers a lot more preparation time and a lot more collaboration time. And, they didn't know how they were going to do it, but they were going to try to build that into the system.

> One of the other things that I was looking for in the PDS was an opportunity to try things. An opportunity to use current teaching theories, I guess you might say, or methodologies without having, you know, a body of teachers that were sort of pulling the other way on the other end of the rope, who didn't feel comfortable with that. So everyone who was coming together here was making a commitment to try new ideas and also to let other people try their ideas without judging them before they're tried. And part of it was a matter of risk taking. Being willing to try something and maybe fail, because not everything we try is going to work, or it may not work at first but we can go at it again. So that was an important part of it. I didn't want to uh feel compelled to be very traditional.

Risk-taking, freedom, experimentation, and new approaches were not abstractions or ideals for these teachers. They were meaningful, tangible qualities that motivated professional activity. As one teacher described his first experiences within the school, it seemed that in at least some cases the desire for a risk-taking climate yielded tangible results:

> I took a risk and stood up and as some people said, passionately described, why. I can remember saying that I didn't come to this school to do the traditional type of thing. I don't want to use the word traditional, because I value tradition. To do the typical things or things that have been done before. I wanted to discuss the essence of things. I thought a professional development school would be that. To get to the essence of what is discipline. What is teaching. What it means to be a teacher. A disciplinarian. I want to get down to the essence. So I risked. That was unique for me. The first time I had ever dared to express something of that nature without fear of reprisal.

<u>The teachers' desire for control over their environment increased through their participation in the PDS.</u>

At the conclusion of the interview process, the teachers were asked if they had given any thought to what they hoped to do in the coming year. Most study participants expressed clear intentions to take even greater control over the process of defining the PDS mission. Several talked about the need for teachers to increase levels of participation in the process:

> I hope our staff will be doing more things. And I think that maybe that will start to happen. It's probably a natural progress, I mean worry about ourselves, and our roles. In this new situation first, and then next year we'll just start leading somewhere as the school.

> The communication and visibility is real important because it portrays the willingness to change. We may not have done a lot of things in the area of

> change, but we feel we're open to it. And I think that's real important. I don't know yet what changes we want to make, but I know that we realize that we are not perfect so we're probably going to want to make some changes and we get the feeling that it's ok.
>
> You know I have a good sense of what the questions are, but there are some questions that are just more valuable than others. And so I think that kind of dialogue and information, "If you would just take it [research question] and slant it that way a little bit you would be helping add to what we don't know." And so I expect interaction like that. And I hope I have a lot of contact with what is going on and who could help me connect.
>
> I think we still have a lot of the philosophy type things to work out. And I think that what we've decided is that there isn't a canned program and I don't think that we'll ever be finished. And that is part of the process. And I don't think that when we originally went into it we thought it was a process. We thought it was a creation that someday will be finished.

One participant's response seemed to disconfirm the assertion that the desire for control over her environment increased through her participation in the PDS. This teacher indicated that she did not intend to return next year. When questioned at greater length, however, she did not regret her earlier decision to join the PDS. What she had first found attractive was still there. Her decision to leave Saguaro was not prompted by an unwillingness to take a more active part in the continuing process of creating what the PDS would be. Her decision was based on her recognition that she was not able to take as active a role as she thought necessary. This was only her second full year of teaching. She found that her inexperience limited her ability to do what she believed was needed to be a good teacher and an active PDS participant. She concluded:

> I've just decided that I haven't had enough time just focusing on my classroom, and my kids, and how I'm going to do things in my classroom. I've

> been giving this too much time and I need to pay attention to other things. I still believe the things that I believed last year, I mean none of those things have changed. It's just been too overwhelming for me.

Other participants, with many years of experience, expressed similar concerns about committing the time required to work effectively in the PDS, but they did not actively seek a transfer.

For all involved, participation seemed to be an overwhelming experience, but one they judged to be worth the effort. For several of them, next year's expectations were built from the current year's realities. Two study participants, discussing hopes for increased opportunities to grow professionally, apparently raised staff development as an important part of the PDS mission and their own professional growth:

> I really thought it would be a place where I could bare my soul. And I could be a student again. I wasn't going to be a sixteen year teacher who everybody came to for advice. Because I knew I didn't know it. I mean I knew that out of all the stuff there was to know in the world, I knew that much. [She indicates about a millimeter with her fingers] And I wanted to know more. I want to continue to learn and grow for the rest of my life.

> I think the staff development is coming along. The research is beginning to intrigue me more and more...I'm looking forward to the growth, the personal and professional growth in terms of working with those individuals [teachers in the school]. I think it will be a challenge, because I see things a little differently from some of them. So, you know, how we communicate and deal with those things will be interesting.

A third teacher saw his experiences with interns and pre-service teachers as being a natural progression in his professional life. His description advances the issue of teacher preparation as a major agenda item for the following school year:

> It's totally exceeded my expectations. I mean it has taken me so far above where I thought I would be going at this point in that it's, you know I wish this [the tape recorder] would pick up me shaking my head in disbelief. I, I had no idea that I would be taking, I didn't think I would take myself to such a higher level as an educator. I did not think I would be afforded the opportunities to share what I know. Another statement that really ingrained into me, and I don't remember who said it was that the relevancy of experience cannot be denied. And I have twenty-five years. That made me feel so good, and it can't be denied. I'm sharing. I'm becoming a teacher of teachers now, and I feel extremely good about that. At this stage of my career it seems like the natural evolution of this learning thing that I've been going through as an educator. Maybe the last state in your evolution is sharing with the teachers.

Conclusion

The Holmes Group (1986) argued that the improvement of teaching depends on providing teachers with opportunities to take an active role in the development of knowledge about the profession, fostering collegial relationships beyond the school's boundaries, and supporting their intellectual growth as they mature professionally. Focusing Professional Development Schools to achieve these goals is the best way to ensure that they are met, according to the Holmes Group (1986). During the last seven years, these schools have been established, but always, it seemed, with a university's perception of what PDS goals should be. The role of PDS teachers, when discussed at all, was envisioned as more passive than active. Teachers would not set a PDS mission or conceptualize its structure. They would simply go along for a well-planned ride to a predetermined destination. One intent of this study was to allow teachers involved in the establishment of a Professional Development School to voice what they

thought their role would be and how that role might influence the nature of PDS activity.

Admittedly, this qualitative study involves a single site, and does not allow for generalizations to all Professional Development Schools. It must also be remembered that the establishment of a PDS is contextually unique. This study presents no binding conclusions but still suggests some interesting avenues for future exploration.

The findings would seem to indicate that the teachers entering a school/university partnership did not share the frequently stated mission for a PDS (i.e., improved teacher preparation programs, staff development programs, and research activities). Teachers did not express these goals from a lack of commitment to them, but from a lack of knowledge about them. Without adequate information the teachers were unable to conceptualize their new roles as PDS teachers in any systematic way. Instead, they relied on their existing perceptions of themselves as teachers and long-held idealized notions about what teachers should be. Even without much information about the PDS mission and operation, teachers were eager to take part in the collaborative process and reported that the "PDS unknown" could be exciting and stimulating.

When study participants began to create their definition of what their role should be, it assumed characteristics of the three missions advanced by PDS proponents. No participant included all three, but there was definite movement to incorporate these missions into visions of what a PDS should be. Even in beginning to accept these missions, the study participants still indicated a strong desire to retain direct control over how they would incorporate them into their classrooms. Perhaps, in this PDS, a version of teacher empowerment was beginning to appear.

There are several questions that might be pursued based on the findings of this study. First, is it atypical that prospective PDS teachers receive little useful knowledge concerning their roles? More specifically, what types of information do teachers receive during the development of a PDS? These questions seem to lend themselves to a follow-up multi-case study of several PDS projects. If teacher mis- or disinformation is the norm, then PDS proponents must ask themselves why? Are university personnel reluctant to share the overwhelming power of knowledge with their collaborative colleagues? Or is the message delivered by professors and school administrators, but not heard by the teachers? This study focused on teacher perceptions. The university personnel involved were not asked about what message they thought was being sent, and no attempt was made to determine if there was a message for participants to overlook. These issues should be explored in future studies.

Additionally, the participants' eagerness to take part in the collaborative process (because they apparently desired to control the process) should receive further study. While our findings seem to suggest that teachers readily sought the opportunity to take part in such a venture, we did not investigate or elaborate the roles they eventually assumed. A follow-up study is in progress to determine how the teachers' experiences relate to their expectations and aspirations.

In conclusion, one must ask whether this study accomplished its purpose. The teachers were given a chance to present their perceptions of their roles in a collaborative process. Determining the accuracy of those perspectives is left to the the reader's judgement. However, on a more basic level, the purpose of the study was to provide a forum for teachers to

explicate their roles, and on that level the study certainly achieved its purpose.

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